

Measures to Prevent Skin Infections in Contact Sports Athletes

There are many different causes for skin infections. Some infections can be transmitted from person to person through skin contact or through items that touch the skin. While skin infections are not usually life-threatening, they can cause lost school, work, or practice time while they are treated. Prevention is key!

Athletes who participate in contact sports may have an increased risk of skin infections. Organizations that sponsor contact sports (such as schools or local youth organizations) may wish to follow these guidelines to reduce the risk of skin infections in their athletes.

- Organizations should teach athletes and coaches how to recognize skin lesions that could be infectious to others. Skin lesions include boils, abrasions, rash, burns, cuts, and insect bites. Skin lesions that are red, warm, swollen, tender, or draining fluid or pus are most likely to be infectious.
- Encourage athletes to recognize and report all skin lesions to their coaches.
- Coaches should check athletes for the presence of skin lesions, particularly:
 - In areas likely to be injured, such as skinned knees and knuckles
 - In places that contact shared athletic equipment such as face masks, pads that touch the body (such as knee pads), etc.
- Any athlete with a suspect skin lesion should be excluded from practice or play:
 - Until the lesions are completely healed OR
 - Unless the lesion can be completely covered by bandaging
- Athletes and coaches should be trained in first aid for wounds
- Encourage good hygiene:
 - Athletes should shower and wash with soap following all practices and competitions
 - Make sure that adequate soap and hot water are available (hand soap dispensers are preferred to soap bars)
 - Discourage sharing towels, equipment, and personal items such as razors, lotions, balms, lubricants, etc.
- As much as possible, reduce sharing equipment that touches the skin, such as helmets, pads, body sensors, etc.
- For equipment that must be shared, such as mats, etc, follow manufacturer's instructions for disinfecting following each practice or competition. If the manufacturer recommends a contact time, that means that the solution must be in contact with the item for at least that length of time.
- All clothing, towels, etc should be laundered in hot water (above 160 degrees F), and dried at the high setting (above 190 degrees F)

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Call your local health department or 1.888.EPI.UTAH to report outbreaks of disease